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A SURVEY OF THE TEACHING OF HOME ECONOMICS IN THE PUBLIC SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF CALIFORNIA

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An attempt was made in the spring of 1920 by the Household Science Department of the University of California to obtain some information concerning the status of the teaching of home economics in the high schools and intermediate schools of California. Necessarily, this inquiry was carried out largely by correspondence, although several of the larger schools were visited by members of the department.

The specific purpose of the study was the determination of (a) the types of teachers giving instruction in home economics in these schools and (b) the types and number of courses offered under this name.

What seemed a suitably brief and unambiguous form of questionnaire was made out. Copies were sent with a letter to at least one teacher of home economics in each of the 249 high schools and intermediate schools listed in the directory of secondary schools issued by the state Board of Education in November, 1919, as offering home economics courses. One hundred and eighty-six questionnaires were returned, representing practically 75 per cent of the schools and including all of the larger systems except those of San Diego, Sacramento, Fullerton, and Glendale.

The questionnaire contained twelve questions, eleven of which required in answer simple statements of fact. Since the twelfth question involved only an expression of opinion by the teacher as to the attitude of the community toward the home economics work, the returns were found to be valueless and have been discarded. The first eleven questions, together with a summary and interpretation of the answers received, will be presented in order.

1. What home economics courses are given in your elementary schools? (This was an effort to discover any continuity which might exist in the courses through the elementary and secondary grades.) One hundred and sixty-nine answers to this question were received. According to the returns, some instruction in sewing is offered in the upper grades of 68 per cent of the schools represented; in 52 per cent cooking is also offered. No correlation with high-school work or instruction in subjects other than cooking and sewing is mentioned.

There appears to be a well-defined tendency toward the introduction of cooking and sewing into the curriculum of the upper grades of the elementary school. Especially is this true of sewing, which is reported in about one-third more cases than cooking. About one-fourth of the teachers answering report no grade-school work in these subjects. Of course, it is realized that these inquiries were addressed to the high-school teachers and that their answers with regard to this phase of the study are probably less accurate and less complete than those with regard to their own courses.

No reference was made in any of the answers to a possible correlation between the elementary and secondary courses, and, indeed, in a number of cases all knowledge of the grade-school situation was disclaimed.

2. What home economics courses are given in your high school? Answers were received from 186 persons, each representing a different school. The kinds of courses offered and the frequency with which each occurs are shown in Table I.

A number of terms other than cooking and sewing were used, although in the classification here given these were considered to mean chiefly cooking and sewing. It is probable that in many cases courses designated by these terms may include other content than that ordinarily thought of under the names of cooking and sewing. A little so-called nutrition or dietetics is usually given in connection with the foods courses, and something of textile testing and economics or taste development in the sewing courses. In the main, however, the impression gained is that routine recipe work with some meal preparation and the making of simple garments constitute the greater part of the high-school instruction in home economics.

The total number of separate courses designated by some other title than those taken to signify cooking and sewing chiefly is only 75, as compared with 339 in which these terms are used. In the light of the prevalence of instruction in cooking and sewing in the upper grades of the elementary schools as revealed in the answers to question one, this condition in the high schools represents a grave amount of repetition in these courses. One of the distressing results of such repetition is lack of interest in, and respect for, the present courses as given in the high schools.

TABLE I

TYPES OF HOME ECONOMICS COURSES AND THEIR FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE

	Number of Schools	
a) Cooking and Sewing:		
Cooking courses, one to three years.....	166	
Sewing courses, one to four years.....	160	
Combined cooking and sewing courses.....	12	
	Included in Another Course	Separate Course
b) Subjects other than cooking and sewing:		
House management.....	17	13
Dietetics.....	3	10
Hygiene, first aid, and home nursing.....	3	14
Cafeteria cookery.....	8	0
Dressmaking.....	2	10
Millinery.....	24	15
Costume design.....	3	6
Interior decoration, house furnishing and planning....	9	2
Weaving, basketry, crafts.....	3	3
Budget-making.....	0	2
Textiles.....	8	0
Laundry.....	1	0

3. Are there any prerequisites for the high-school work? If so, what are they? The number of answers received was 173.

There are no prerequisites in 80 per cent of the schools reporting. A certain school standing is required for the foods work in eight cases and for clothing work in four cases. Science courses are advised or required for the foods courses in nineteen cases and freehand drawing for the clothing work in two cases. There is indicated nearly complete isolation of the home economics high-

school work from the elementary-school work in its own field, and from high-school courses in related fields. It is likely that individual teachers effect a less detached relation than this, but the rank and file are apparently unimpressed by the need for articulation. Possibly that fear of prescription of anything in connection with high-school courses which is so characteristic of most secondary curricula makes this condition no more an indictment of home economics than of most other departments.

4. What is the average size of class? Replies were received from 164 schools. The sewing classes where separately specified are somewhat larger than the cooking classes. The majority of all classes are from ten to sixteen in number. No overcrowding is indicated.

5. What length is the period for the home economics classes? This question was answered for all the schools reporting. In most of the answers, nothing was said as to the frequency of the lessons, and it is therefore assumed that the classes meet every day as is the usual high-school custom. In fourteen cases, however, it was specified that the classes meet only two or three times a week.

The favorite length of period is eighty to ninety minutes, evidently a "double period." With judicious planning, single recitation or laboratory periods have in some cases been found satisfactory and economical for both the foods and clothing work. Superior organizing power and industry are required of the teacher to make the shorter period effective. The resulting greater simplicity and flexibility of schedule under this plan usually tend toward a larger enrolment in these classes.

6. What textbooks do you use? One hundred and eighty-one teachers answered this question. The various texts reported and the extent to which each one is used are shown in Table II. It will be noted that three books, Greer's *Textbook of Cooking* and the two Kinne and Cooley books, are mentioned 159 times out of a total of 224 times that any titles at all are given.

It is interesting to note in the suggestive and constructive monograph on *Home Economics in American Schools*,¹ recently

¹ *Home Economics in American Schools*. "Supplementary Educational Monographs," Vol. II, No. 6. Chicago: Department of Education, University of Chicago, 1920. Pp. xii+122. \$1.25.

published by the Department of Education of the University of Chicago, that nine books on food and ten on clothing were found to constitute 95 per cent of all textbooks used in the one hundred and sixty-seven cities in forty-one states from which answers to questionnaires similar to that used in this study were received. The Chicago investigators report 100 per cent of the high schools as

TABLE II
THE VARIOUS TEXTBOOKS IN USE IN HOME ECONOMICS COURSES IN 181
SECONDARY SCHOOLS AND THE FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH
IS REPORTED

Textbook	Number of Schools
None.....	31
Greer, Carlotta, <i>Textbook of Cooking</i>	92
Kinne, Helen, and Cooley, A. M., <i>Foods and Household Management</i>	28
Matteson, Emma B., and Newlands, E. M., <i>A Laboratory Manual of Foods and Cookery</i>	6
Wellman, Mabel T., <i>Food Study</i>	5
Campbell, Matilda, <i>Textbook of Domestic Science</i>	5
Rose, Mary S., <i>Feeding the Family</i>	4
Bailey, Pearl L., <i>Domestic Science—Principles and Application</i> ...	4
Farmer, Fannie M., <i>Boston Cooking School Cook Book</i>	4
Forster, Edith Hall, and Weigley, Mildred, <i>Foods and Sanitation</i> ..	3
Conley, Emma, <i>Principles of Cooking</i>	3
Pirie, Emma E., <i>The Science of Home Making</i>	3
Morris, Josephine, <i>Household Science and Arts</i>	8*
American Red Cross, <i>Home Care of the Sick</i>	5
Other books on foods, 1 each.....	8
Kinne, Helen, and Cooley, A. M., <i>Shelter and Clothing</i>	39
McGowan, Ellen B., and Waite, C. A., <i>Textiles and Clothing</i>	3
Baldt, Laura I., <i>Clothing for Women</i>	2
Gibbs, C., <i>Household Textiles</i>	1
Fales, J., <i>Dressmaking</i>	1

*In elementary schools.

using textbooks or basic references. This is in contrast with the 80 per cent found in the present study. It is somewhat striking that the California returns mention only five books on clothing and textiles but twenty-one books on food. Only one book, that by Morris, is specifically mentioned as confined to use in the elementary schools.

The state textbook law providing that a textbook once adopted must be retained for four years, and the increasing tendency toward purchase of textbooks by the high schools serve to keep in use books once adopted. In view of this fact, special care should be exercised in the selection of textbooks to be adopted in any subject so new and unstandardized as home economics.

7. What number of rooms do you have? How arranged? One hundred and eighty answers were received.

The majority of the schools, 75 per cent, provide from one to three rooms in the high-school building for the home economics classes. These consist usually of the kitchen laboratory with table desks, pantry, dining room, and a sewing room with a small fitting room. Not many of the teachers complained of the space provided, since new buildings seem to be planned in those cases where present conditions are unsatisfactory. A relatively small number of schools, thirteen, provide a so-called model apartment or house. In most cases, these apartments seemed of rather perfunctory importance in the teacher's scheme of instruction. On the whole, the physical equipment and space provided for this work in the high schools seems fairly adequate.

8. Are there any classes in vocational home-making (Smith-Hughes) being given in your school? In your community? If so, how are they arranged for? Of the 184 replies received, 138 stated that no classes were organized under this plan. Sixty-four Smith-Hughes classes were reported. Of these, forty-five were in sewing and millinery, eight in cooking, and two in home nursing. Nineteen night-school vocational classes which were not under the Smith-Hughes Act included eleven courses in sewing and millinery and five in cooking.

It is evident that so-called Smith-Hughes classes have not been organized in any large percentage of California communities. Since their organization was begun only three years before this survey was made, it may be that this represents only a temporary condition, rather than a refusal to accept this vocational plan.

A serious criticism might well be directed at the type of work given in the classes reported. Out of 83 vocational classes, 64 of them under Smith-Hughes aid, 56 are in sewing or millinery and 13

in cooking. The sewing and millinery classes are usually organized in response to the demand by older women and girls for aid in the making of garments and hats, and often have no other outcome than the articles made while the class is in progress. The cooking classes may offer something more permanent, if only in the shape of a collection of recipe cards or a cookbook. The futile character of this type of instruction is only beginning to be appreciated; and it is earnestly to be desired that outlines of courses, textbooks, problems, and illustrative material dealing with the more fundamental phases of home economics be prepared and distributed among the schools offering vocational courses. Consumer's intelligence as needed in purchasing, standards of taste in choice of clothing and house furnishings, and the principles of nutrition and child hygiene are a few of the most obvious of these neglected subjects.

9. Is there a cafeteria or lunchroom in your school? What connection, if any, has your department with it? Ninety-seven of the 171 schools represented in the returns for this question report no cafeteria or lunchroom. An analysis of the reports of the seventy-four schools maintaining lunchrooms is presented in Table III. A surprising proportion of the schools apparently make no

TABLE III

RELATION OF HOME ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT AND SCHOOL LUNCHROOM AS OPERATED IN SEVENTY-FOUR SECONDARY SCHOOLS

Relation of Lunchroom to Department	Number of Schools
No connection with department	18
Managed by home economics teacher, with occasional help from classes	18
Food prepared by classes occasionally sold in lunchroom	14
Class serves the lunch occasionally	4
Class does all the work of luncheon, either regular cooking or special cafeteria class	9
Class serves teachers daily	4
One hot dish served daily by class to school	7

provision for the noonday meal of the pupils. Of the 74 (43 per cent) which have such provision, the home economics teacher is concerned in some way with the food service in all but eighteen schools.

The problem of the relation of the foods classes to the school lunch is not an easy one to dispose of. The subordination of logical instruction in the economic and scientific, as well as the practical, phases of the use and choice of food to mere food purveying for the convenience of the school, is the not uncommon outcome of combining the lunchroom and class instruction. Those teachers who declare their department to have no connection with the school lunch may have been forced into this position in order to avoid this kind of situation.

On the other hand, the occasional preparation of the lunch or, better still, the disposal of products through the lunchroom, or the carefully rotated training of selected students in a cafeteria class, may well make the lunchroom a valuable part of the foods laboratory. The connection must be guarded, however, so that the service of the meal shall not be paramount to the training of the students.

10. Do you teach any courses other than home economics? If so, what? Eighty-eight of the 186 teachers replying do not teach other subjects. The combinations which are effected are indicated in Table IV. Some duplications are included in the tabulation, as each subject was counted separately, and several teachers mentioned more than one additional subject.

TABLE IV

OTHER SUBJECTS TAUGHT BY HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS AND THE
FREQUENCY WITH WHICH EACH COMBINATION OCCURS

Other Subjects Taught	Frequency	Percentage of Subjects Mentioned
Physical education.....	29	25.5
Drawing.....	29	25.5
Laboratory sciences.....	19	16.6
English.....	9	7.9
Foreign languages.....	9	7.9
Miscellaneous, e.g., bookkeeping, music, history, and mathematics.....	19	16.6

Almost one-half of the teachers answering teach no subject other than home economics. This is probably largely due to the state rulings as to certification which make it impossible for high-school teachers holding only the special certificate of the household arts type to teach anything but home economics.

The ruling that teachers holding the regular high-school credential may teach any high-school subject regardless of their preparation is perhaps still necessary, but certainly not desirable. The ideal certification is, of course, that which shall require the bachelor's degree and at least one year of graduate work for all high-school teachers, but which shall make all certificates "special," that is, limited to a certain field. Under this plan the present holders of the special household arts certificate would find themselves in the anomalous position of combining two diverse subjects, one an applied art, the other an applied science. The acquisition of a specialist's training in both these fields is clearly impossible. The solution lies, therefore, in the combination of the scientific phases of home economics with the fundamental sciences they illustrate, and of the artistic and economic phases with their fundamental subjects. Thus, the teacher of foods, sanitation, and child hygiene might also, if necessary, teach chemistry, physiology, biology, general science, and physical education. The teacher of clothing, costume design, and house furnishing might also teach drawing, crafts, civics, and history.

The natural tendency toward this division of high-school teaching is seen in the predominance of physical education, drawing, and laboratory sciences among the classes assigned to home economics teachers. That English and foreign languages are next in frequency is probably due to the large number of classes in these subjects which must be organized by even the small schools. It may be that teachers of all subjects are equally liable to assignment to these classes, provided they have the regular high-school credential.

The possible confusion of all "special" subjects in the minds of principals may have something to do with the frequent assignment of physical education and drawing to the teacher of home economics. That the same teacher should be equally capable in handling the two- or three-sided subject of home economics and the utterly diverse fields of physical education and drawing is unlikely.

11. In what institution was your own training obtained? What degree? How many years have you taught? A summary of the replies to this question is presented in Table V. The number of years of experience recorded by these teachers shows some

interesting facts. As might have been expected, a large proportion, about 65 per cent, have been in service less than five years. A very small number, only ten or twelve, reported more than ten years'

TABLE V

DATA CONCERNING TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE OF 181 HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS

INSTITUTION	NUMBER OF TEACHERS	NUMBER WITH DEGREE	NUMBER OF YEARS OF EXPERIENCE	
			One to Five Years	Over Five Years
Colleges and universities in California:				
University of California	45	45	45	.....
Stanford University	6	.....	4	2
Pomona College	4	.....	.....	4
Occidental College	2	1	2	.....
University of Southern California	2	.....	1	1
Mills College	6	5	2	4
Total	65	51	54	11
Normal schools in California:				
Santa Barbara State Normal School and other institutions	18	6	7	11
Santa Barbara State Normal School alone ..	28	.....	19	9
San Jose State Normal School	6	.....	5	1
Fresno State Normal School	2	.....	2	.....
Los Angeles Normal School	6	.....	2	4
Chico State Normal School	1	.....	1	.....
San Diego State Normal School	3	.....	1	2
Total	64	6	37	27
Institutions outside of California:				
Kansas State Agricultural College	6	.....	3	3
Oregon Agricultural College	6	6	4	2
Colorado State Teachers College	4	4	2	2
Teachers College (Columbia)	8	.....	3	5
Stout Institute	8	1	3	5
Simmons College	2	2	2	.....
Pratt Institute	2	.....	1	1
University of Minnesota	2	1	2	.....
University of Illinois	2	.....	1	1
Ohio State University	2	.....	.....	2
One each from other institutions	10	.....	5	5
Total	52	14	26	26
Grand Total	181	71	117	64

experience. The relation of experience to training may mean something in terms of changing fashions in teacher training. A larger proportion, 83 per cent, of the college- and university-trained

teachers are under the five-year mark than the normal-school graduates, of whom 58.7 per cent have had less than five years' experience. A similarly low percentage of younger teachers is found among those trained in institutions outside the state, only 50 per cent of these having less than five years' experience.

The establishment of a home economics department in the University of California only five years ago accounts for the presence of only young teachers from that institution. The tendency, on the whole, seems to be toward an increase in the number of university-trained teachers of home economics, with corresponding decrease in the number of normal-school graduates and of teachers from other states.

It is recognized that these data apply to only 75 per cent (181 out of 242) of the teachers of home economics in the secondary schools which offer such instruction. There is no reason to suppose, however, that the other 25 per cent vary appreciably from the general relations here described. The striking predominance of special household arts certificates in the large city schools is probably largely accounted for by the prevalence there of the supervisory system. Supervisors of domestic science, home economics, or household arts are listed in seventeen of the larger California cities. Many of these supervisors are, of course, the more capable older women who received their training in the earlier days of home economics education and who would therefore be inclined to choose for their departments normal-school graduates and vocationally experienced women rather than the younger university-trained teachers. Older teachers are usually found in these schools also, since the turnover in these positions is apt to be less than in the small country schools.

A question might here be raised as to the wisdom of supervision in the high-school home economics departments. With the present teaching personnel, this may be desirable and indeed necessary, but we should surely face the problem of so raising the standard of home economics teaching as to leave its administration in the hands of the teachers themselves, as is the custom with other high-school subjects.

The type of schools from which the foregoing answers were received is shown by the analysis of the returns presented in Table VI. The apparently small percentage of answers received from

TABLE VI
TYPES OF SCHOOLS AND THE PERCENTAGE OF HOME ECONOMICS TEACHERS
REPRESENTED BY REPLIES

Size of School	Number of Replies	Percentage of Replies	Percentage of Home Economics Teachers
Less than 100 pupils.....	60	32.3	28.5
100 to 400 pupils.....	84	45.1	32.6
Over 400 pupils.....	42	22.6	38.9
Total.....	186	100.0	100.0

schools of more than 400 pupils may be explained by the fact that in these schools there are usually two or more teachers of home economics employed, whereas a questionnaire was addressed to only one teacher in each school.